

NEW YORK TIMES 3 MAY 67

Approved For Release 2006/01/30 : CIA-RDP70B00338R000300090044-8

## Kosygin Opens a Door

President Johnson has persuaded the Soviet Union at least to discuss the possibility of averting an ap-  
pallingly dangerous and costly race by Moscow and  
Washington to deploy antiballistic missile systems.  
This news is especially welcome as an antidote to  
recent Soviet statements that discouraged hopes of  
negotiating a freeze on A.B.M. development.

It is true that Premier Kosygin has responded cau-  
tiously to the President's proposal for discussions  
about heading off what would be a major escalation  
of the competition in weapons of mass destruction.  
But his willingness to discuss "means of limiting the  
arms race in offensive and defensive nuclear missiles"  
does represent an advance from the Soviet leader's  
remarks on the subject at a London news conference  
last month.

He then implied that nuclear defense systems did  
not increase international tensions and that the limited  
Soviet A.B.M. deployment around Moscow was "not a  
factor in the arms race." Other Soviet commentators  
had previously rejected Mr. Johnson's argument that  
the United States and Russia have a common interest  
in curbing an A.B.M. contest, as well as in disarm-  
ment in general.

Yet that common interest is surely as evident as  
it was in the nuclear test-ban treaty of 1963 or in the  
pact concluded at the United Nations last year to bar  
weapons of mass destruction from outer space. The  
first casualty of an all-out Russian-American race to  
build A.B.M. systems would be the slowly evolving  
*détente* that produced those two treaties and that has  
now brought the two governments close to accord on a  
nuclear nonproliferation pact.

Such a race would revive the cold war at its worst  
and freeze East-West relations for years. Only the  
bellicose Chinese Communist regime could possibly  
benefit from this ominous development. And the

supreme irony is that the systems costing each coun-  
try perhaps \$60 billion probably would add little to  
either's actual defense capability over the long run,  
and certainly would increase, rather than diminish,  
the chance of nuclear war. Time is running out for an  
agreement to halt this menacing spiral to the atomic  
arms race.

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